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State Representative Ralph Ayres  
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## Economic Development and the Budget

This year I voted to support the biennial budget which included bold economic initiatives for Indiana. Our “Right Track Indiana” legislative agenda created a vision to redefine how government works and re-ignite our stalled economic engine. By putting forth a plan that creates jobs immediately and attracts investment to our state for the long-term, we have taken the first step toward putting Indiana back on the right track.

Our consensus plan focused on four strategies to diversify Indiana’s economy and attract new industries while sustaining our manufacturing sector and improving the environment for existing employers:

- **Redesigning Government** – To improve the way Indiana does business, making our state more marketable and setting benchmarks for continuous improvement.
- **Tax Structure Improvements** – To further enhance the Indiana tax code to offer incentives to private investment in both new equipment and skilled employees.
- **Strategic Investments** – To assist our universities, improve technology infrastructure, and assist rural economic development.
- **Targeted Incentives** – To support ailing economic sectors and take advantage of opportunities to create jobs.

I will continue to focus on government efficiency and spending restraint as we work now to propel Indiana on the right track to fiscal integrity.



A Message from State Representative  
**Ralph Ayres**  
House District 4

The residents of Northwest Indiana have felt the effect of the national recession much harder than most areas of Indiana because of the massive changes in the steel industry and the ripple effect on all residents, employers, and employees in our area.

During the 2003 session of the Indiana General Assembly, I worked in a bipartisan manner with other members of our delegation to seek improvement in our state and area economy by supporting a budget that has extensive tools for economic development.

I co-authored House Enrolled Act 1858 which will help stabilize the tax liability of the integrated steel mills in our area thus giving them a reason to invest dollars for short and long term development. It is my hope this will reduce the potential for reduction in work force and will create a demand for construction jobs.

In addition to this bill, I introduced legislation that would create a tax credit for those who own a home that has American steel framing. I will continue this effort to enact tax credit increases for steel framed housing during the next session of the General Assembly to create an important market stimulus and demand for a product that is vital to employment in our area. Since the housing industry is strong and the demand for steel by the auto industry is decreasing, creating an incentive to use steel in home construction could be a major benefit for those in the steel and housing markets.

Along with my fellow area legislators, I requested the budget leaders in the House of Representatives and the Indiana Senate to help those retirees who have lost insurance coverage due to the current struggles of our steel industry.

This post-session newsletter provides details on other major issues of this session, including the state’s biennial budget and our economic development initiatives. You also will find news relating more specifically to our district and contact information so that you can keep me informed of any questions or concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me whenever necessary.

Sincerely,

*Ralph D. Ayres*

Ralph Ayres



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For more information regarding the 2003 General  
Assembly, visit **www.in.gov/legislative**

At the beginning of the 2003 session of the General Assembly, the governor proposed that education spending be flat-lined for the next biennial budget. If the governor's proposal had been implemented, schools in Indiana would have suffered greatly, possibly laying off teachers and postponing technology upgrades, among other things. This idea was unacceptable to me because it would have negatively affected what is most important – our children's education. As the session continued, legislators worked creatively to give schools in Indiana the necessary funding, a difficult feat considering Indiana's annual budget deficit of \$850 million.

The final budget approved by the General Assembly increases school operating funding by an average of 3.3 percent in 2004 and 2.9 percent in 2005. The budget will inject \$541 million of additional funding into the operating budgets of Indiana's 293 public school corporations. Higher education will receive more money too, with an increase of 5.3 percent in 2004 and 3.6 percent in 2005, for operations, research and research-oriented facilities.

The new school funding formula provides additional funding to growing school corporations in our state while protecting the funding for schools experiencing enrollment declines. No school will receive less than \$4,350 per student. Additional funding is based on five factors: children enrolled in the free-lunch program, families in poverty, single-parent families, parents without a high school diploma and children who are learning English as a second language. This funding is provided in recognition of the added cost of educating disadvantaged and at-risk students.

| School District       | Funding Increases for 2004 | 2005 |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------|
| Kankakee Valley       | 3.9%                       | 2.8% |
| Crown Point Community | 4.0%                       | 2.0% |
| M.S.D. Boone Township | 3.2%                       | 2.6% |
| Duneland School       | 3.1%                       | 2.4% |
| East Porter County    | 2.9%                       | 2.5% |
| Porter Township       | 2.9%                       | 2.2% |
| Union Township        | 3.5%                       | 2.3% |
| Valparaiso Community  | 2.9%                       | 2.4% |

Education remains my number one priority. I believe that our children deserve the best educational opportunities possible, even in a struggling economy.

I authored five bills that were signed into law by the governor this session. Two of the new laws enacted maximize the efforts of local government units to correct obsolete or conflicting new state statutes, including the streamlining of local rainy day funds for local governments.

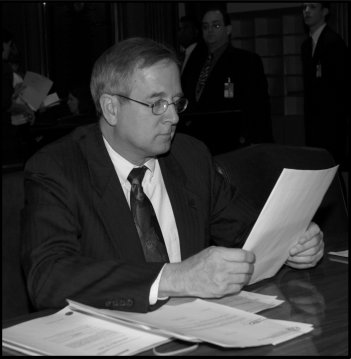
I authored HB 1933 which will guarantee fifteen days each year of training to government employees who are serving in the Military Reserve and National Guard without loss of pay. HB 1408 will allow electronic filing of child support payments to make it easier to get the dollars to those children in need. In addition, HB 1734 which was signed into law by the governor on May 8, 2003, improves the due process rights of non-permanent teachers. This was supported by the school boards as well as the teacher unions and associations.

Another battle we fought and won this session was against the proposed \$37 fee for auto emissions testing. This fee was proposed by some downstate legislators who were looking for ways to rein in the state budget. My colleagues and I were able to eliminate this provision and keep the state-mandated program free of charge.

During the 2003 session of the General Assembly, the legislature approved the construction of a new facility at IVY Tech College in Valparaiso and approved planning for a facility in Portage. Additionally, legislation was enacted to maximize the use of Gary Regional Airport and matching funds were included to continue work on the Little Calumet Flooding Project.

The delay in property reassessment is an additional concern in our area. I co-authored House Enrolled Act 1219 which allows each county that has not completed reassessment to send provisional tax statements so our schools and local governmental units can operate with less need to borrow money, thus saving taxpayers additional expense.

Though this session has concluded please contact me with your concerns. I will continue to work hard and monitor these and other ongoing issues for Northwest Indiana.



Representative Ralph Ayres, hard at work reviewing bills before voting.

Northwest Indiana is facing many important issues regarding utilities. Our area has paid the highest utility rates in Indiana for some time.

I have continuously fought on your behalf with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) over rate increases and anything that would be detrimental to individuals paying for utility service. The price of energy in our area is directly linked to economic development, and high utility bills can be a burden on working families struggling to pay bills, senior citizens on fixed incomes, and the poor and disadvantaged. I will continue fighting for you on this front.

Northwest region state legislators, myself included, have contacted the IURC and urged them, on behalf of utility



Representative Ayres meets with a Statehouse reporter in the Chamber.

customers, to keep in mind how their decisions will affect those living in our region. I have also contacted the IURC several times and will not stop until I know that all decisions before this agency have been made in a fair and equitable

manner. If we are to endure the cost of living in a high-cost service area, then we must be assured a high quality of customer service. Any efforts to reduce services to our area fall short of meeting the obligations to us, the consumers.

I will continue to make sure that the IURC hears the voices of the people who are affected by their decisions and will fight for your best interests.

### Representative Ayres appointed to important Interim Summer Study Commissions

- The Commission on Courts
- The Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission
- The Steel Industry Advisory Commission
- The Midwest-Canada Relations Committee
- The Shoreline Development Commission

Hoosier Rx, Indiana's prescription drug program for low-income seniors, has been changed. Instead of being issued a refund check after the prescription is purchased, a senior enrolled in the program can simply present his/her plan membership card at the retailer to receive the benefits.

Hoosier Rx covers all drugs that require prescriptions, as well as insulin. The changes to this program will be phased in over the next few months. Listed below are several prescription assistance programs currently being offered to Hoosiers.

#### Hoosier Rx

- Indiana's own discount prescription drug program.
- Provides low-income seniors with up to 50% savings on medications.
- A yearly benefit of up to \$1,000 for recipients.

For additional information please call (866) 267-4679

#### Pfizer for Living Share Card

- Designed to provide a bridge for a target group of Medicare beneficiaries until a Medicare prescription drug benefit is established.
- Seniors pay \$15 for up to a 30-day supply for Pfizer medicine.
- Convenient prescription refills at retail pharmacy.
- Free health education materials.

For additional information please call (800) 717-6005

#### Connection to Care

- Medical office-based program.
- Provides nearly 30 Pfizer medications free of charge at the physician's request.

For additional information please call (800) 707-8990

#### Sharing the Care

- Pharmaceutical access program that donates Pfizer medications to low-income individuals through federally funded community, migrant and homeless health centers across the country.
- Developed in partnership with the National Governors Association and the National Association of Community Health Centers.

For additional information please call (800) 984-1500

#### LillyAnswers Card

- Provides discounted medications for low-income Hoosiers (annual individual income less than \$18,000, annual household income less than \$24,000).
- Seniors pay \$12 for a 30-day supply of any Lilly drug.
- Prescriptions are filled at participating retail pharmacies.
- Patient education and disease management tools.

For additional information please call (877) RX-LILLY 795-4559